

The United States and Human Rights - A Long and Violent History



AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS

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When speaking about the United States' blatant, constant and egregious violations of human rights, it is difficult to know where to start. That brutal, rogue nation, which disdains human rights and holds international law in contempt, is guilty on both the domestic and international stages.

In order to fully understand the depth and breadth of the United States' many crimes against humanity, violations of civil and human rights, and violations of international law, we must look at its history. The nation was founded on the extermination of millions of Natives, peoples who had lived on the North American continent in peace for centuries. The government was established in the hands of white, male, wealthy landowners, with everyone else subservient.

After the genocide of millions of Natives in order to found the nation, it was built using slave labor. An estimated 12,000,000 Africans were kidnapped, forced to sail across the ocean in the most wretched conditions, and then forced to labor for long hours and little pay. About 600,000 of these victims wound up in the United States, where they were bought and sold the same way one might by a chair or car today; there was no regard for their humanity. Those who died on board, and there were many, were simply thrown overboard, considered nothing more than garbage, with no respect or consideration for the feelings of their family members.

As the two centuries of the U.S. unfolded, there was nothing but increased violence, always justified by the same racist attitudes that caused the slaughter of millions of Natives. A few examples will suffice.

During the Philippine-American War of 1899 – 1902, William Howard Taft, later elected to the presidency in the United States, was appointed civil governor of the Philippines after the U.S. demanded possession of that nation when it defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War. Taft said that the Philippine people were “a vast mass of ignorant, superstitious people.” The wife of another government official described them in this way:

“It looks to me as though it will take fifty generations of ‘line upon line’ and ‘precept upon precept’ before these natives will know enough to govern themselves. Many of them seem to be very stupid. The men here in this house who teach in Manila schools say the natives can’t reason.”

These attitudes were the underlying cause of the slaughter of the Philippine people as they resisted the imperial designs of the United States.

Sixty years later, the U.S. invaded Vietnam, where one unspeakable slaughter finally gained notoriety, despite U.S. efforts to keep it secret from the public. On March 16 of 1968, over 400 unarmed civilians were massacred by U.S. soldiers in the village of May Lai. Racism was foundational to this atrocity. One of the soldiers in charge that day was charged with the premeditated murder of ‘Oriental human beings’, rather than of ‘human beings’. One man who wasn’t accused spoke in defense of those who were. He said this:

“A lot of those people wouldn’t think of killing a man. I mean a white man – a human....”

Another said this when referring to the victims:

“It wasn’t like they were humans.”

In its long and violent history, the United States has ignored human rights, international law and even common human decency in its quest to become a world power. Just in the last 50 years, it has invaded, or supported anti-government terrorists in, at least 30 different countries, sometimes doing so multiple times. No other country on the planet can match that level of violence.

Now that we have taken a very brief look at the nation’s bloody and violent history, we will move to the current day, and first look at violations of human rights within its own borders.

Today, the U.S. is operating concentration camps along the U.S. – Mexico border. In these camps, children as young as 2 years old are ripped from their parents and put into cages with other children, some as young as 10, who are told to care for the younger ones. They sleep on concrete floors with only an aluminum blanket for warmth. They are provided with insufficient food, have no soap or toothpaste, and are often riddled with

insects. They do not receive needed medical treatment. Guards mock them if they cry. Several have died in U.S. custody. Yet there is no major effort within U.S. governance to change this horrific situation.

All across the country, law-abiding, unarmed citizens of African descent are routinely shot and killed by members of the U.S. police force. It is rare that a white police officer is charged with any crime for these murders; rarer still that one is convicted.

When a U.S. citizen of African descent is lucky enough to be only arrested, they are arrested for such 'crimes' as driving their own car, walking in their own neighborhood, or entering their own home.

Additionally, access to voting, considered a fundamental right in the United States, is restricted, mainly, but not exclusively, based on race. Polling places in predominantly black districts have fewer available hours for voting, and often have more reports of voting machine malfunctions. Some areas demand identity cards before a citizen can vote; if a citizen doesn't have a driver's license, getting such a card can be difficult. This overwhelmingly impacts the African-American communities in the U.S.

Health care, housing, food and drinkable water are all available to the wealthy, but are not considered rights for anyone else.

While the violations of human rights of which the U.S. is guilty within its own borders could be further detailed in many volumes of books, we will move now to its current crimes on the international stage.

U.S. violence against Iran is just one of many current examples. In 2015, the U.S., Iran and several other nations and the European Union all signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In exchange for limiting its nuclear development activities, Iran was promised relief from cruel and unjust sanctions. Before the U.S. could officially be a partner to this agreement, it needed to be approved by the U.S. Congress, which it was. It was also authorized by the United Nations.

During the administration of President Barack Obama, who spearheaded the agreement, the JCPOA was honored by all participants, with the United Nations periodically

certifying Iran's full compliance. But in May of 2017, the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the agreement, in violation of its own law and international law, and threatened the other signatories with economic sanctions if they maintained the agreement. Those other nations refused to stand up to U.S. bullying, and cruel economic sanctions against Iran were reimposed.

It is interesting to note that the U.S. government understands the impact of such sanctions, and yet issues them anyway. Prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the U.S. had issued sanctions which resulted in the deaths of at least 500,000 children there. When Secretary of State Madeline Albright was asked if the sanctions were worth this horror, she replied:

"...we think the price is worth it".

People have also accused Albright of war crimes in Rwanda, Yugoslavia and Columbia, but the U.S. government continues to hail her 'greatness'.

And what has Iran done to incur the wrath of the United States' irrational and unstable president? The government refuses to surrender to U.S. demands which, if adhered to, would make Iran cease to be Iran. It must, in the eyes of the U.S. government, give up its right to defend its citizens. It must yield in all things to apartheid Israel. It must establish a government that will never oppose any crimes the U.S. commits.

The U.S. has always coveted oil-rich Iran. In 1953, the U.S. overthrew the democratically-elected government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, and installed the brutal Shah of Iran as monarch. For the next twenty-six years he oppressed the people of Iran, with complete U.S. support. During the Shah's brutal reign, the U.S. supported his efforts to destabilize Iraq. Finally, he was overthrown by a popular people's movement in 1979, against the wishes of the United States. The hypocritical U.S. government always says that it supports the self-determination of people around the world, but this is a blatant lie, and the overthrow of Iran's government in 1953, and the continued hostility of the U.S. towards Iran since its people did, in fact, establish a government of their own choosing in 1979, is just one example of this hypocrisy.

Another is Palestine. The nation of Palestine has been occupied, blockaded, bombed, and terrorized by Israel since at least 1967, and all this has been financed and fully supported by the United States. The United Nations has issued more resolutions critical of Israel than it has of any other nation, but the U.S. still supports its war crimes and crimes against humanity. These atrocities are ongoing and continue to this day, with no end in sight.

Also currently, the U.S. is perpetrating economic terrorism against the people of Venezuela, demanding that the socialist president step down, so a leader more to the U.S.'s liking can take control. Rather than allow the people of Venezuela to choose their own government, the U.S. is doing all it can, short of bombing the nation, to force change.

Let's look at one example of the U.S.'s 'success' in defeating a democratically-elected government. In 1964, Socialist candidate Salvador Allende seemed headed for electoral victory in Chile. The U.S.'s criminal, terrorist organization, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), spent more money supporting his opponent than was spent on the U.S. presidential campaign that same year, and Allende was defeated.

Six years later, however, he was victorious, but a Socialist leader in Chile could not be tolerated by the United States. The U.S. government first tried to prevent his inauguration and, failing that, U.S. president Richard Nixon said he would "make the economy scream". But it wasn't only brutal economic sanctions that the U.S. inaugurated; it spent millions to support violent opposition parties.

Before long, the U.S. was successful, and the Socialist Allende was overthrown, replaced by a man much more to the U.S. government's liking, General Augusto Pinochet. He ruled for 17 long, brutally-oppressive years, during which time opposition political parties were banned, and at least 3,000 political opponents were killed, and at least 29,000 tortured. And during those 17 years of terror, Pinochet had the complete support of the U.S. government.

These are just a few examples, among many, of how the U.S. only demands that other nations abide by international law and human rights. We could also consider the

decades-long, violent U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, or its support for the Saudi Arabia genocide of the people of Yemen.

The shocking murder of journalist Jamal Khoshoggi, ordered by Saudi Arabia's leader, Mohammed bin Salman, is overlooked by the U.S. government, which has full and cordial ties with that nation. Also overlooked is Saudi Arabia's blatant discrimination against women.

The Israeli government's apartheid laws, its discrimination and brutality against Arabs and Africans, bring no opposition from the U.S. government.

The list goes on; it is estimated that, just since the end of World War II, the United States has been responsible for the deaths of at least 20,000,000 people.

This is the nation whose government dares to proclaim its moral superiority. This is the government that holds itself up as a model for the world to emulate. Its fantasies aren't believed much outside its borders, and the fact that it is now alienating some of its oldest and strongest allies can only be beneficial to the world. Although its current leader is clearly unstable, its power in the world is decreasing, and while this makes it particularly dangerous in the short-term, it is hoped that President Donald Trump will not ignite a disastrous global war. Whoever succeeds him will find a weakened United States, and that can only help to make for a more peaceful world.



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